

A 733
VINDICATION
OF A
PRINTED LETTER
ADDRESSED TO THE
CALVINISTIC BAPTISTS
OF THE
WESTERN ASSOCIATION,
ON THE SUBJECT OF
DOXOLOGIES;
FROM THE
REMARKS OF A MEMBER
OF THE
WESTERN ASSOCIATION.

BY A BAPTIST.

"The weapons of our warfare are not Carnal." PAUL.


*"I withstood him (Peter) to the face, because he was to be
blamed."* PAUL.

TROWBRIDGE:

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DEAR SIR,

AGREEABLE to your wishes, I submit to your consideration, a few observations on a pamphlet, that is intended as a reply to a letter addressed to the Calvinistic Baptists on the subject of unscriptural doxologies.

I doubt not but you will recollect that the author of that letter charged the orthodox Baptists with using doxologies in their public devotions which are unscriptural; that they were so tenacious of these forms of their own making, as scarcely ever to ascribe glory to God at the conclusion of their prayers, in the very devout and expressive language which was used by Christ and his Apostles; and that this practice seems to arraign the wisdom of our blessed Savior in not adopting the most suitable forms in ascribing glory, dominion and praise to God—has an obvious tendency to create suspicions in the mind of the people at large, that the Apostles were not perfect judges of the way to conduct our devotions, and consequently that the phraseology of the New Testament, is not the most correct and expressive to describe God, and the worship which all men owe to him. For it was said, if other phrases must be almost universally used, such as have no direct countenance in the Bible, to express the ideas we have of the Deity, the natural inference is this; that those who use such phrases, must think them *better upon the whole* than those which were used by the holy Apostles, men divinely inspired! And this conclusion must hold good universally, respecting such as are in the habit of substituting a human form for one that is divine, and of copying the example of fallible men, instead of adhering to the direction and practice of our great

Lawgiver

Lawgiver and his Apostles. Besides this practice appears totally inconsistent with the sentiments of the Baptists, as was shewn in the letter already referred to—for it is one of the professed leading principles, of this denomination of christians, to adhere to the plain precepts and examples of the Bible, in forming their faith, and in conducting their worship.

With this conviction, the Letter-writer was quite at a loss to understand, how the Baptists could expect their brethren; the Pædobaptists to relinquish their practice of sprinkling infants because it was not founded on any *direct precept or example in the New Testament*, whilst they were in a similar practice as to their doxologies. The one is as much built on *inference* as the other, and it appeared to him neither fair nor candid, to expect from others a compliance with a law, or rule of conduct, that was not admitted to bind the persons who made it. Indeed I am quite of the opinion that the Pædobaptists have it in their power to address the orthodox Baptists in an *argumentum ad hominem*, that is very just, though a little severe; It is thus expressed in the language of scripture; “Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.” When you compare the importance of the ritual and variable parts of worship, with the moral and standing parts of it in all ages, you will think the language of our Savior to be in point in the case to which we are now applying it. In my view there is no proposition in the world, more self evident than this; The moral circumstances of men being the same, they ought to be governed by the same laws. It is from this principle we infer, that a departure from the direct instructions of the Bible, in the more important parts of religion, will warrant a departure from them in the less interesting concerns of it. And if this principle be admitted, I cannot see but it will eventually
lessen

lessen the reverence we ought ever to have for the word of God. But how can the Baptists, the orthodox Baptists, think that their expostulations about baptism can be attended with any success, whilst they depart *as far*, at least from the scripture, as their Pædobaptist brethren? This is a trait in human conduct and expectation that cannot easily be described. The principle is this, *I* may act without precept or precedent to govern *my* conduct, nay in opposition to both; but if a *fellow christian* does the same, *he* is censured by me, and demanded to reform! Now the person who can do this, must possess a very peculiar habit of mind, or he must presume very much on the candor of the world if he expect not to be told, "go and obey the law that you have made: shew by your practice, that the positive authority of God in all things regulates your own conduct."

But the writer of the remarks on the letter to the Baptists, will perhaps prove that the positive rites of religion and ascriptions of praise to God, are not subject to the same law. The difference, if there be any, will make in favor of the argument of the author of the letter to the Baptists, since positive rites *may vary* with the circumstances of mankind, as is evident from the dispensations of revealed religion, and consequently the laws that institute them are not of an unchangeable nature; whereas ascriptions of praise and glory to God, must remain ever the same, as long as God and man exist. This being the case, you will not wonder that the writer of the remarks hath not advanced *one reason* in favor of the distinction that some have supposed to exist between the law that regulates our conduct in all the positive rites of religion; and the law that directs our devotion in the more solemn parts of it. Had he attempted to *reason* on the subject, in this view of it, I am satisfied it would have operated directly against the practice of not adhering to scripture modes of worship;

ship, in concluding our prayers after the example of Christ and his Apostles. He quotes a passage from Mr. BOOTH'S *Pædobaptism Examined*, (p. 23. 24. 25.) of remarks, which faith nothing but this—"That the Baptists require positive precepts or examples to direct us in the ritual part of worship—and will admit of proof by inferences in matters of moral obligation"—And what is this to the purpose? We knew all this before. This is stating propositions and leaving others to prove them! But you will ask the writer of the remarks for his proofs: for you look for *evidence* in this case, and not *authority*—you expect some reasons to be produced why inferences will not do in one case as well as in the other. I appeal to you Sir; I appeal to the orthodox Baptists themselves; if Mr. BOOTH, or the writer of the remarks, has advanced any thing like a reason, for the variation of the law that directs the rites of religion, from that which governs the moral obligations of worship. The fact is, that in many instances, moral obligations partake of the nature of positive institutions: Such are the first and second commandments—and such is the direction of our Lord, where he saith, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The worship of God, generally considered is a moral obligation founded on relationship; but when God is pleased to inform us *how* he will be worshipped—that worship becomes doubly binding—becomes a positive institution, from the *express* direction of our great Lawgiver and Judge. Here then you will observe nothing can be found that favors unscriptural doxologies. Thus far Sir, we have no apology in reason, for a common usage in divine worship. Let us turn our attention to this writer's proof from scripture, why he prefers unscriptural doxologies, to scriptural ones. The subject in this view of it becomes new and curious! It is placing scripture against scripture—or perhaps, as it will presently appear, arguing from inferences, against a current of the most direct proof.

We are told that we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—and that there are three that bear record in heaven, and that these three are one—that Christ and his Father are one—and that the Apostle wishes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, to be with all christians: And from these premises the writer would infer that the Calvinistic Baptists ought to use unscriptural doxologies. The argument that is built on the commission, to favor the common orthodox doxologies, “proves too much, therefore it proves nothing”—Paul tells us, 1 Cor. x. 2. That the Israelites were baptized into Moses—a phrase which undoubtedly means the same as to be baptized into the name of Moses, see Gal. iii. 27. and Rom. vi. 3. But were the Israelites obligated by this to pay the same divine honors to Moses as to God? Will the writer of the remarks assert this? But this he must do to be consistent, or to make an argument to favor an unscriptural usage from this text. At any rate I may be permitted to ask—Are these scriptures in point? Have they any reference whatever to prayer? The answer is plain—No. For what purpose then they are introduced in the remarks, is best known to the writer himself. It is certain they are not direct proofs. The arguments he would draw from these premises, amount to nothing but *inferences*—and inferences so *precarious* and *far-fetched* in their application, as never to be alluded to by any of the Apostles, and the first and most glorious christians, in the conclusion of their prayers. Inferences are not admitted in the affair of Baptism, when the question is not so much about the institution itself, as about certain circumstances that relate to the ordinance, and which it is supposed will admit of a latitude of interpretation. The Pædobaptists in general, as well as the Baptists, acknowledge the validity of Baptism, but differ about the mode in which the ordinance is to be performed, and about the subjects

subjects of it. Here however inference is nothing at all, according to the view of the vindicator of the orthodox Baptists. Why might not I say in my turn I will not admit of your inference ? You have not given any reason why I should. Sir, I demand a positive precept of You—You have made the law—and your brother BOOTH has ratified it. *He* hath shown that positive precepts and precedents are all in all in the affairs of revealed religion. Indeed he would wish to explain away this point where it presses him, but he has not favored us with his *reasons* for so doing ; and he hath said so much in favor, of the *fulnes* and *perfection* of the scriptures in *all things* that concern our faith and practice, that I am inclined to be of his opinion. As for what the writer of the remarks hath said about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—I suppose he will admit that the Apostles knew as much as himself, about Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and honored them as much as he, or any of his orthodox brethren may do—Yet they never used his doxologies—they never thought that they robbed Christ and the Holy Spirit of any of their glory by not using modern sound doxologies ! Is the writer of the remarks more anxious about glorifying the Trinity than the Apostles were ? Or is he afraid of heresy if he should be in the habit of following them ? Is he apprehensive of the truth being sacrificed by imitating the first christians who shed their blood in defence of the pure gospel ? Can you suppose if the modern doxologies had been understood by the Apostles to be the great bulwarks of the orthodox faith, they would have omitted them ? You cannot answer this question without supposing either that the Apostles did not judge such ascriptions were agreeable to their views of the gospel—or they did not think they tended to spiritual edification—or else they were ignorant on the subject, or indifferent about it, and left it to modern ages, I will not call them times of ignorance, because all this happened under the gospel dispensation, to settle more suitable expressions to convey our
ascriptions

ascriptions of glory to God, than were used by men divinely inspired ! Suppose I were to make my appeal to the world, and ask who understood the Christian religion best ? Christ and his Apostles—or the orthodox Baptists of the Western Association ? Whilst then I find the author of the remarks and his brethren unwilling to conduct their devotion and ascriptions of praise, according to the example of Christ and his blessed Apostles, “ Whilst they forbear the use of this remarkable apostolic language, it looks as if they were conscious that it would not properly express the facts to which it should be applied”—and it looks as if they supposed the first christians have not left us the best directions to give God glory and praise ! But if this principle be admitted, I fear it will carry us too far, to support the sole authority of our gracious, wise, and compassionate Savior, over his church. We must therefore reject the principle that would mend the gospel, and would make the reasonings of fallible men, of equal authority with the facts that are recorded in the Bible. I might press this point, and place it in still stronger light, did I think it necessary.

Having noticed all that this writer has attempted to say from scripture, in defence of his practice, permit me to speak to the *only argument* in his whole book, advanced against the reasoning in the letter to the Baptists. The substance of it is this—The Author’s proposition in defence of scripture doxologies proves too much, therefore it proves nothing—p. 26 remarks. But surely this reasoning may be turned against himself by the Pædo-baptist—He may say, “ Your demand of us, that we produce a direct precept or example proves too much—you admit of inferences in some parts of religion, as valid proofs—are you the only judges in what cases inferences are to be received or rejected ? If you infer, permit us to enjoy the same privilege—we have the same Bible as you have—and the same God to serve—and the same conscience to keep pure—let us agree in the facts of christianity, and express

express them in the language of the scripture, and let us understand them in the presence of God ! For the present however, let us wave this advantage of comparing difficulties, and of forming an *argumentum ad ignorantiam*—Let us fully meet the objection, and examine its force.

Prayer is an address to the Deity, and consists of several parts ; Some parts respect the great object of our devotion in his unchangeable nature and perfections, in his unrivalled honors and glories ! We call upon him as our *God, Creator or Father*—in these relations he is the same throughout all ages and kingdoms. We confess at his feet, that we are guilty, and have rebelled—here we express ourselves in that language which is most suitable to describe our condition, and the language will vary at different times, with the variations in our moral circumstances. Our unworthiness in one view will impress us *now—then* it will strike us in another—In short, this part of prayer will be as variable as our frames, exercises, trials, temptations, hopes and fears. So also with respect to our petitions—At one time we have this favor to ask of God, at another time we have another to petition for : Would the prayers of the three Jews in the fiery furnace ; of Daniel in the Lion's den ; or of Jonah in the belly of the fish, have been suitable to be used in any other situation, when 'tis probable their object was deliverance from such singular afflictions ? You will easily observe that our confessions and petitions are parts of prayer that have relation to the *variable frame* and situation of men—but when we ascribe all power, dominion, and praise to God, as he is ever the same, we may with the strictest propriety submit to be taught by men divinely inspired : The conclusion of our prayers, such as hath relation to the unchangeable nature of God—to his everlasting and universal dominion, should for that reason be the same as we have been taught by the word of God to ascribe to him, unless we think that we ought to be wiser above what is written—unless we judge we know how to give
glory

glory to God, in terms more consistent and expressive than those we are directed to by the Holy Ghost. And if we entertain such a presumption, it is not the way to honor the Holy Spirit, though we may talk much about our obligations to him !

If the writer of the remarks had distinguished between such parts of prayer as are expressive of the *mutability* of the Creature, and those which relate to the *immutability* of God, he might have seen the propriety of adhering to the latter, when the former could not possibly apply. It may be further observed, that very few of the prayers of the Apostles of any length have been transmitted to us—not so as to their ascriptions of glory and praise. We have a great variety of these, either of which we may use with safety, candor and charity, and by so doing we shall avoid introducing confusion and contention among the worshippers of the same God : and promote his glory by maintaining an unity of spirit, in the steadfast bond of the gospel of peace ! How much more benevolent and christian would this appear ! How much more in harmony with the dignity of our profession, and the glory of our calling, to drop unscriptural epithets of party distinction, in the most solemn parts of worship, and unite as the children of the same God, in expressing our ideas of his glory, in strains with which he is pleased to inspire us ! Mistaken must that mind be, which thinks that it gives glory to God, when it is cherishing confusion in his family—wounding the conscience of pious and sincere worshippers—departing from the letter, if not from the spirit of the gospel, and affording satisfaction to none but the mistaken and prejudiced ! Surely this is not the kind, friendly and healing spirit of Christ ! We cannot behold it contended for but with grief—yet contended for it is, so long as any resist the scripture doxologies ! If the spirit of true and exalted piety be our object, whilst we cherish the worship of God, what vast advantage shall we find by comparing the energy and
sublimity

sublimity of scripture doxologies, with those that are used by the Calvinistic Baptists ! Let us here contrast the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God concluding his prayer, with the author of the remarks and a member of the Western Association concluding his. The former, with all the gravity of an Apostle, standing before God, will thus ascribe glory to his Maker—he will stile him “ The blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting, Amen.” This description appears so full of dignity, majesty and confidence, as powerfully to impress the heart ; as to hold the soul in a kind of reverential suspense ! Here I see the greatness of my God ! But let us hear a modern orthodox Baptist expressing himself on the same subject—“ To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed dominion and praise for ever.” p. 22. of remarks. What an amazing difference in language !—but it might be thought invidious to follow the comparison any further, as the one was an inspired Apostle, the other a fallible man ! May we have humility to learn of Jesus Christ and his Apostles ! This will be the best proof of our submitting to the righteousness of God ! In point of piety and charity, adhering to scripture doxologies has vastly the preference.

And here Sir I should conclude, had not the author of the remarks testified his approbation of the Association letter of the year 1785. After some of the leading ministers in the Western Baptist Association had expressed their *disapprobation* of the letter in question—it is something very inexplicable, to find it spoken favourably of by this writer, (see p. 8. 9.) yea, as containing *the same system of truth* as is still taught by the ministers in this connection.

Permit

Permit me to request your sentiments on the following passage in the above named letter.

“ We lament with you, the aboundings of vice in
 “ every form ; the name of God is profaned—his good-
 “ nefs abused—his day is despised—his law is insulted,
 “ and his worship is neglected : These things shall be
 “ for a lamentation, but these are not the greatest evils we
 “ see prevail, nor are you most in danger in your christi-
 “ an course to dishonor the Lord, from the transgressi-
 “ ons of the wicked”---and then adds---“ But the snare
 “ which endangers the christians stedfastness, is the
 “ plausibility of error, and the character of those who
 “ offer it to us---*Where there is a professed regard for the glory*
 “ *of God and the good of mankind, accompanied with a candid*
 “ *temper, and a life of virtue ; there we wish you to suspect, till*
 “ *you have examined every proposal made to you.*”

According to this representation, the supposed speculative errors of such men as profess to glorify God, with a candid temper and virtuous lives ; are greater evils than *blasphemy, profanation, &c.* I will not make any remarks on this passage, but leave it before the public tribunal to stand or fall, to be applauded or censured ! I have only to add, this is one of the passages the writer of the letter to the Baptist thought exceedingly uncandid, reprehensible and injurious, and such as ought not to have the sanction of a body of christian ministers ! But the whole letter it seems, must now be defended ! *Tantæ animis cælestibus iræ ?*

It appears to me, that the writer of the remarks is inclined to loose sight of the question at issue---*the doxologies*---and introduce the Trinity and atonement, as subjects of debate. But much has been said by many good men already on these points ; and I hope it will give offence neither to the author of the letter, nor to the gentleman who makes remarks upon it, to say, that *more* has been said wisely and learnedly on these points, than it is in
 their

their power to improve upon: Besides it is impossible from his remarks to say, what Trinity, or what atonement the remarker would wish to defend: Every person of any discernment, I believe, that will read the remarks will give him credit that he does not mean to defend the old Athanasian orthodox Trinity, for he cautiously avoids the peculiar distinctions which we find in the celebrated creed of St. Athanasius: Nor does he appear willing to countenance the doctrine of three distinct, divine, philosophical persons or beings in one God. see p. 12 of remarks. The writer of the letter to the Baptists is as firm in the belief of the scripture doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of the glorious doctrine of our reconciliation to God by the death of his Son, as any one of the members of the Western Association. In these observations I have a much higher object than to fix the attention of the public on the *person* of the writer of the remarks, otherwise, I could direct you, and the public, to observe what doctrine is taught in p. 16. 17. 18. of remarks, and in p. 12. 13. I am candid enough however, to hope that the author did not see clearly what he there advanced; otherwise he would have avoided it. The spirit and manner of this writer I can *pity*, but cannot suffer myself to imitate.

The obnoxious passage in p. 16. of letter to the Baptists, means no more according to my view, than that it is an acknowledged maxim among the Calvinistic Baptists, that unscriptural worship is wrong; and that the worship which hath neither a direct precept nor precedent to sanction it, is the worship intended to be described. Of this nature is the worship that is sanctioned by the common doxologies; and if so, it must be wrong---and it must be known to be so to all those who candidly examine the word of God, and maintain the principle referred to. This is the idea the author of the letter to the Baptists has of the subject; what is wrong in one, is wrong in another, and the principle that makes it wrong is obvious: If this explication of the passage is indefensible,

sensible, he gives it up as incorrect; not from the reasoning of the remarker, for he has said nothing to prove that it will not admit of the above interpretation but from a principle of candor. Nevertheless, he has a right to say that the above was the sense in which he meant the phrase, "you know it is wrong," and he submits this sense to the judgement of the public. He was not so gross as to affix to his brethren in general, the very coarse epithets that their friend hath seen proper to apply to them, for he has a real esteem for the pious and sincere of every party. And it is also evident the monthly reviewers, a body of the first respectability in all the walks of literature and liberality, *did not* understand the passage in question, as the writer of the remarks was pleased to construe it: Nor can it be said with candor, that their attention was not sufficiently called to it! The author of the remarks is at liberty if he please, to correct these gentlemen.

Pardon me Sir, for introducing those little personalities, as they can interest the public opinion but very little, and the point at issue none at all. I shall only detain you for a few moments longer, whilst I remind you of the state of the question as it now stands betwixt the Calvinistic Baptists and the author of the printed letter that was addressed to them on the subject of unscriptural doxologies. It remains yet certain that we have in the new Testament above twenty different forms of concluding prayer, and ascribing glory to the Deity, and yet not one of these is generally used by an orthodox man. It also appears that the Baptists continue to demand of their brethren the Pardonbaptists, a precept or example to justify their practice in sprinkling their children, and will not admit of the plea of inference; and yet they will make use of inference themselves, to justify their departure from the express declarations of the gospel: It is evident too, that they are tenacious of avoiding the scripture doxologies, and thus of establishing a principle that calls in question the supremacy of Christ in his church, and all this is done to support the purity of the gospel. But certainly this is beginning at the wrong

wrong end, for who can think soberly of supporting the purity of the christian religion in any other way, than by complying with the precepts and imitating the example of Christ and his apostles? Christ saith, *learn of me*. If they were to permit a friend and a brother to speak to them on this subject, he would tell them that the side of the question which their member would defend, must be in great want of scripture proof to support it, or else their advocate has not made the most of the evidence it afforded. * He would therefore beg them to review the state of the evidence on both sides, and to search the word of God, as the servants, and disciples of Jesus Christ, in order to know where the truth lies. The scripture doxologies *must be right*, therefore they may be used with a *safe conscience* by all; and they can teach nothing but scripture doctrines!

Men and brethren! Ye are called to the liberty of the gospel; let no man be stiled Master by you in the concerns of religion--The question before you is a plain question; you are therefore competent to judge of it, and to act under the fullest conviction of its truth. Consider seriously, that in opposing the scripture doxologies, you oppose plain parts of the new Testament--If you view them as indifferent things, you occasion a suspicion to take place as to the importance and usefulness of some parts of the gospel revelation: And finally, let me intreat you to agitate that question often in your mind, "What man dares go in a way that hath neither precept nor example to warrant it; from a way that hath a full current of both?"

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I will not add to these observations by an apology for their length, but submit them to your candid perusal, and continue,

DEAR SIR,

JUNE 10th. 1789.

YOUR SINCERE FRIEND,

* The writer of the remarks appears to be so much out of temper with his subject, as to be every way unfit to discuss a question that requires calmness of mind in the investigation. I therefore recommend it to the orthodox Baptists, to commit the defence of their doxologies to one of their brethren who will consider that the point at issue is of a religious nature--and who will treat it with seriousness.